

## The Jewish Problem.

BY THE REVEREND FREDERIC C. SPURR, HOVE, SUSSEX.

THE 'Eternal Jew,' often hidden in the mists of history, but always emerging from time to time to make the world aware that he is present, has now become a central figure upon which all eyes are focussed. The 'purge' in Germany and Austria, with its unparalleled brutalities and insults, has outraged the conscience of the entire civilized world, save that enclosed portion which claims to have a monopoly of *Kultur*. Before the unprejudiced conscience of humanity the appalling persecution of the Jews, simply because they are Jews, can have no manner of justification. It may be admitted, and indeed it is admitted by Jews themselves, that certain restrictions upon the activities of a certain type of Jew in Germany were perhaps necessary. There were Jews, unquestionably, who exploited Germany, and cared only for their own profits. (But are there no Britons who treat their own country in a similar way? And no Americans?) If proved offenders had been treated hardly, no voice would have been raised against the action. What has aroused the enlightened conscience of the world is the indiscriminate attack upon an entire people on account of their race; people, also, many of whom are more German than Jew by reason of birth and social service. And tragedy becomes farce when the purge is undertaken under the pseudo-scientific claim of a pure blooded Germany which must not on any account be tainted with a Semitic admixture! How even German anthropologists and historians must be laughing up their sleeves! We begin, therefore, by an expression of the deepest sympathy with a harried and outraged community.

The desperate situation calls for immediate emergency measures, and these are now, happily, being considered, both by many States and, naturally, by the Churches.

Beyond the problem raised immediately, however, there lies an ultimate problem, that of the Jew himself *qua* Jew, and his future. The disposal of the *émigrés* from Germany and Austria, however happily achieved, still leaves the main problem to be faced and settled. For it is a world problem with roots going far back to pre-Christian times. It is becoming acute even in the United States, where, nominally, there is no 'race' question at all. And it is not at all, as so many are fond of saying, a problem that has been raised by Jewish contacts with Christianity.

The simple truth is that the Jews have always been disliked from the days of Egypt onwards, and there have been few countries in which their presence has not, sooner or later, been resented. This fact must be taken into account as part of the wider problem, and some answer must be found to the inevitable question, *Why* has this people always been suspected and disliked? There must be some reason for it, other than that of shifting national policies. It is true, alas! that Christendom has, more than once, lent itself to the anti-Christian business of persecuting this race. For such iniquitous work no justification can be offered. Persecution is wholly foreign to the spirit of Him who prayed, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.' Yet there is another side to this story, a side which is frequently overlooked. Very rarely is it recalled that successive Popes entered the most serious protests against the Jew baiting in Spain when the Inquisition was at its height, or that the great Saint Bernard, the most important man in Europe, personally journeyed to Germany to arrest the massacres of Jews. And how many people know that in the Roman Missal the first day of August is set apart for the double commemoration of Saint Peter *ad vincula*, and the Holy Macca-bees, those Jews who, under Antiochus were done to death for their fidelity to the faith of their Fathers? If we are to have history at all, let us have it completely. The story of mediæval times is not quite so black as it is often painted by partisans.

The question before us, however, is that of the Jew *to-day*. Whatever has happened in the past, it is the present and the immediate future which are our concern. The approach must be sympathetic, at least for a Christian, for no Christian can be anti-Semitic. He is bound by his faith to respect all men whatever be their race or creed. Yet, with the sympathy, there is need of the clearest thinking.

We may begin by asking what is the charge against the Jew? What are the alleged grounds for disliking him? They may be summarized under one or two heads.

(1) First, it is alleged that he is *arrogant*. He still believes himself to be the 'chosen' of God, the spiritual superior of others. Judaism is declared to be the purest form of religion. With

this, it is said, there also goes the sense of mental superiority. 'The Jew is destined to rule the world.' Sir George Adam Smith (*Syria and the Holy Land*) tells how he visited a Jewish colony in Palestine. The Jews were gambling, while the *fellaheen* were working for them at a low wage. Sir George remarked, 'This could not be the intention in giving them the Holy Land.' And the reply came at once 'Is it not written that the sons of the alien shall be your ploughmen and vinedressers?' The great influx of Jews into Palestine, followed by the success of Tel Aviv—which eclipses Jerusalem—the establishment of a Hebrew University, and the commercial exploitation of the country, has given the Jew a new sense of superiority, so much that one of them could write: 'The 250,000 Jews are of more value than 800,000 Arabs because of our investments.'

It will be seen, therefore, that there is no religious question here at all. Mr. Sidney Dark, in his valuable book on the Jews—largely favourable to them—says, 'The Jew has a superiority complex,' hence he inclines to be arrogant and discourteous.

(2) There is alleged against him an undue influence in the financial world. 'He is a born gambler.' He loves to control money. Generally, he avoids manual labour, whenever possible, and seeks 'money jobs.' He has been the money lender, *par excellence*, and as the courts have often shown, at exorbitant rates of interest.

(3) A third allegation is that of an undue influence in commerce. The cinema is largely in his hands, as also the clothing, tobacco, furniture, jewellery, and fruit businesses. It is said that many of his business methods are underhand, that he does not trade under his own name, that in Britain he adopts a British name to conceal the fact that he is a Jew.

(4) His methods of killing beasts for food are described as 'inhuman.'

(5) He remains aloof from the community in which he has sought refuge, or into which he has been born. His food and his general habits are not those of the people amongst whom he lives. His day for worship is not that of the majority. He can therefore take advantage of the Christian Sunday to pursue his trade to the detriment of those who have to close their establishments on that day.

These are some of the common charges brought against him. They should be proved or withdrawn. So long as they remain in the popular mind they are a source of irritation. It will be observed that in this summary the religious question does

not appear. The underlying dislike is due to social and economic reasons. As Mr. Sidney Dark frankly says, 'The Jew is responsible for this suspicion. *He is apart by his own act.*'

We may pass on to inquire, *What does the modern Jew say of himself?* Here we are on surer ground since there is no prejudice at work. During the last five or six years a number of books have poured from the press setting out the Jewish case, and expounding the Jewish ideals. With these also have been produced a number of films for the purpose of propaganda. It is significant that several of the books come from the United States, which has the largest Jewry in the world. The city of New York alone has more than two millions of Jews, a greater number than in the whole of Britain. Four of these books may be selected as typical of the remainder.

In 1934, Messrs. Macmillan published *Judaism as a Civilisation*, by Mordecai M. Kaplan, an ex-Rabbi who left the Synagogue on account of his unorthodoxy. He wrote his book with the avowed purpose of reconciling American-Jewish life. For in the United States the growth of the Jewish community, and its influence in the commercial world has raised the very question (with one difference) which has come to a head in Germany. Mr. Kaplan's main question is, 'Why should Jews endure the inconvenience of remaining Jews in Christian countries?' His book is intended to supply the answer. And it is very significant. 'It is *not*,' he says, 'because of religion.' 'The Jew will not be reduced to the status of a religious denomination.' No! the entire question for Mr. Kaplan is a social one and not religious at all. He himself is not an orthodox Jew, yet he demands his right to remain a Jew. 'Heavenly salvation is not his main interest.' 'The Jews are a distinct *nation*' (*sic*). 'There is a unique Jewish culture.' 'The Jew must in all parts of his life be a Jew.' And he wishes America to accept that: the existence of a separate people who also share the life of America.

A year earlier (1933) Josef Kastein published his *History and Destiny of the Jews*. He also has no place for the religious question. He is frankly rationalistic. Thus: 'It was not God who willed this people and their meaning, but this people who willed this God and the meaning.' . . . Speaking of Palestine he says, 'Palestine was not a gift of God: it was won by war.' The idea of a 'chosen people' vanishes. By the chosen people is meant 'the survival of a people as an *example*.'

... Even more truculent is the sentence, 'Judaism has no mission, and has never sent out missionaries.' He makes some rather remarkable admissions, such as, that the Jews themselves were responsible for Rome crushing them. Still more remarkable: 'Christianity was not responsible for the persecution of the Jews . . . it was not true Christianity but *political acts*' (p. 229). Other admissions are equally suggestive. The Jews, he says, came to England only after the Norman Conquest, and their motive was 'attraction by the economic possibilities it held out.' Mr. Kastein seems to have no superiority complex. 'We shall not yield to the temptation to claim for Judaism men of outstanding ability merely because they happen to be Jews.' The entire book, indeed, is in effect a surrender of the whole idea of the 'chosen people.' Yet Mr. Kastein reaches the conclusion that the Jew *qua* Jew is 'a people destined to endure.' But for this he advances no reason whatever. . . .

A decade ago (1924) a Jewish apologia, *Essays of Jewish Life and Thought* appeared in this country. In this composite work little or nothing is made of the religious question. The outlook is almost entirely secular. 'The first duty of man is to make the world a tolerable place to live in, and only when he has done that will there be time to turn to the world beyond.' As to religion, it is stated that 'Judaism is not a systematized religion. It has no definite dogmas. *It is really an outlook on life.*' . . . And yet 'Judaism is the purest form of religion,' and 'the Jews are the yeast of the earth.' Here the superiority complex is in evidence, but not in any way as a deduction from any premises supplied by the authors of the volume.

Laurie Magnus, in *Jews and the Christian Era* (1929), sums up his conclusions in a practical sentence: 'Christianity is in debt to the Jews for the Old Testament,' therefore 'Jews should share lavishly in the fruits of the civilization they helped to sow.' Here the outlook is frankly materialistic: heavy interest for their comparatively small share of the Capital.

To these four typical books of their class may be added a fifth, published in 1937—*The Jew in Revolt*, by William Zukerman, an American journalist. His book has not been favourably received by Jewry. We must allow for a certain hysteria in its pages, and also for certain exaggerations. It is the facts he presents which are so challenging. He has no love for Zionism, which, he considers, is politically minded rather than religiously minded. And he traces

many of the present troubles in Palestine to the speculators in real estate and building, who in 1924-5 forced a financial boom which harmed the country. Economically they formed the most decadent class in Jewry (p. 149). For them business and commerce were to take the place of work on the land. Palestine was to become the business centre of the near East, and was to awaken that part of the world to the glories of Capitalism (p. 151). 'The entire middle-class period in Palestine, 1924-1936, was permeated with the rush and push, grab and keep spirit of this class; its ultimate purpose being *not* to change Jewry and make it fit for a new type of life in Palestine, but to *change Palestine* and make it a suitable refuge for the Jewish middle classes' (p. 152). And so they 'turned Palestine into a restless, predominantly commercial and financial centre with all the artificiality of industrialism in its decay' (p. 153). And he concludes that 'if the present régime continues it will imperil Judaism all over the world.'

Zukerman's book needs reading with caution. The opinions and the facts he adduces must be sharply separated. But it should be read all the same.

These five revealing books tell us a great deal concerning the modern Jew and his relation to the rest of the world. They make it clear that the Jew, as such, has no *exceptional* contribution to make to *religion*, for the reason that he has no special religion; nothing in fact that is not found in Islam, and in a richer form in Christianity. For the orthodox Jew religion does not advance beyond the Old Testament. But the orthodox Jew is in a minority in the advanced countries. American Jewry is, in the main, more divided than are the great Protestant denominations. 'Liberal' Judaism has in effect abandoned Mosaism and much of the Old Testament. Many Jews have become Theosophists, Eddyites, and Spiritualists. It is said that in New York 80,000 Jews have left the Synagogue for the Eddy cult. It would appear, therefore, from modern Jewish writings that there is nothing left in Judaism, on its religious side, that in any way is exceptional.

But what of the cultural claim? It is here that the Jew advances his special rights. There are some great Jewish names in science, literature, and medicine. But Mr. Kastein will not claim these as possessing outstanding ability 'because they happen to be Jews,' but for quite other reasons, such as the milieu in which they are found, and the culture with which others have enriched them.

For the Jew *qua* Jew has created no civiliza-

tion. Greece and Rome bequeathed to the world great memorials, the Jew has bequeathed none. His contributions to literature and science are comparatively rare. 'He comes late into the field which others have sown.' The great names of science are non-Jewish: Watt, Stephenson, Marconi, Pasteur, Edison, Galileo, Newton, Oliver Lodge, Jeans. The great names in literature, art, and philosophy are non-Jewish: Michael Angelo, Dante, Tasso, Descartes, Kant, Shakespeare, Goethe. And also in music: Joachim, the famous violinist himself a Jew, deplored the fact that there had never been a Jewish composer of the first rank. Meyerbeer and Offenbach are not comparable with Palestrina, Bach, Beethoven, Wagner, Mozart, and Elgar.

It would not seem, therefore, that there is any justification for the notion that there resides in Judaism a native superiority which gives it the right to claim exceptional privileges. We may rather sympathize with Isaac Disraeli who left the synagogue because 'it cuts Jews off from the great family of mankind.'

These conclusions, which are drawn from Jewish admissions, certainly do not err on the side of sentiment. If they appear to be drastic, the responsibility for this belongs to those who have practically renounced the specific Jewish claim. In the last analysis, therefore, we are left with the Jew as an individual: an alien, a wanderer, who, having no country of his own, has settled in Christian countries, yet who, as Mr. Sidney Dark says, 'remains apart by *his own act*.' It is this fact which constitutes the Jewish problem. *And the problem can only be solved by the Jew himself.* As a religious person he has the right to his own form of worship, and also the right of protection wherever he settles. To persecute him for his religious convictions is unjust and contemptible. But as a racial person he must make up his mind whether he will remain apart, or assimilate with others. If he insists on remaining racially apart, then he must find a country of his own. He cannot remain a separate nation within another nation. A return to the Ghetto is impossible. There remains Palestine. But that country is not large enough to contain the whole of Jewry. Besides, the majority of Jews do not want to live in Palestine. Zionism is a minority movement. Further, the Jew has no greater right to Palestine than has the Arab, who outnumbers him. Yet he is practically claiming that right which, however, is forbidden by the Mandate. The present clash in Palestine is due entirely to this cause. It is not a question

of Islam *versus* Judaism. It is a question of a new race seeking to dominate an older one.

The alternative to this is for the Jew to renounce all national and racial claims, and to share completely the life of the people amongst whom he has found refuge. In a word, to be absorbed socially. Mr. H. G. Wells in his *Shape of Things to Come* visualized this as the ultimate solution. If the Jew has no exceptional religion to maintain and no exceptional culture to offer, then why should he continue to remain apart? For him to be absorbed would be no more than has happened to Britain and Germany and other peoples during the centuries. And the experiment is now being tried in the United States which accepts all nationalities, and aims ultimately at creating one nation out of them all.

But the Jew must *share completely* the life of the people amongst which he dwells. He must take his share of all the tasks, pleasant and unpleasant and cease to specialize in finance and trading. For originally the Jew was neither trader nor financier. He was an agriculturalist. He has developed trade and finance in the course of history and largely through circumstances. But the conditions to-day are wholly changed and it is neither necessary nor desirable that one race should continue to dominate finance or certain industries. The Jew has no native 'genius' for these things. They are largely accidental to him, and the goodwill and peace of the world depend upon a practical recognition of this fact. If the Jew will abandon his exclusiveness and arrogance and belief in his own superiority and throw himself into the common life of the world, he will solve the entire problem. If he refuses, then friction is bound to continue and develop.

Meanwhile, the Church must find a new way of approach to the Jew, for the question on our side is more than political or social; it is eminently religious. Christian Britain has been very kind to the Jew. It has given him asylum, broken down all barriers to his progress, and offered him many honours. And the best type of Jew is changing his attitude towards Christianity. The ancient hate and acrimoniousness are dying. Jews no longer spit at the mention of the name of Jesus. Mr. John Cournos' book (1938), *Hear, O Israel*, is a remarkable evidence of this. He makes a powerful plea to his co-religionists to recover the Jesus whom, he says, they have misunderstood. He even admits the supremacy of Jesus. 'To me the Jewish Bible without Jesus is as unthinkable as it would be without Moses. . . . Moses inevitably led to Jesus.'



The whole book is keyed to this note. Yet Mr. Cournos wants a purely Jewish Christ. And he would get rid of S. Paul and all Christian theology. It is the Jesus of history, with his temporal limitations that he desires. 'Jews to remain Jews must take up their culture *where they left off* nineteen centuries ago.' It is a remarkable admission, but it is retrograde for all that. Still, that a Jew who believes that his race is still the 'chosen people,' should go so far as he has done, is highly significant. There is a new openness of mind, and a movement in the Unitarian direction which hold much promise. And on the Christian side the modern attitude

towards Old Testament prophecy offers a new approach through the medium of the ancient writings. Christianity can only win over the best kind of Jew, as Christians show in their lives that their faith is dynamically superior to any other, and that Christianity is not the destruction of the core of the Jewish faith, but its natural and Divine fulfilment. The older methods of Jewish evangelization are no longer possible, but the double change in the higher Jewish outlook, and in the better Christian understanding of progressive revelation, give us a new basis for trying to solve the age-long riddle of the Jew.

## Literature.

### A FINE COMMENTARY ON FIRST CORINTHIANS.

AN outstanding work of the moment is Dr. James Moffatt's Commentary on the *First Epistle to the Corinthians* in the Moffatt New Testament Commentary (Hodder & Stoughton; 8s. 6d. net). It is not only an invaluable aid to the study of the Epistle, but is also at the same time a work of considerable theological importance as an exposition of St. Paul's thought. The apt illustrations from ancient and modern writers which we have learnt to expect in Dr. Moffatt's writings reappear in this volume, together with illuminating extracts from missionary literature. The book can also be read as a devotional manual, and a preacher who knows his way will find it full of attractive suggestions.

The Introduction is brief but it adequately covers the important points. Dr. Moffatt explains when and why the Epistle was written, and gives a vivid picture of Corinth and of the conditions which obtained in the Corinthian Church. He also discusses the question of the unity of the Epistle, and adds an interesting section on its significance as a Christian writing. On the whole, his judgment is in favour of accepting the Epistle as a literary whole. He is well alive to the possibility that 6<sup>12-20</sup> 7<sup>17-24</sup> 10<sup>1-22</sup> and 11<sup>2-34</sup> may originally have belonged to the 'first' letter to the Corinthians (cf. 1 Co 5<sup>9</sup>), along with 2 Co 6<sup>14-7<sup>1</sup></sup>, but his opinion is that the reconstructions ably advocated by Johannes Weiss and M. Goguel 'are not quite convincing.'

Interesting and important as such discussions are,

the most valuable part of Dr. Moffatt's work lies in the Commentary proper. To this task he brings wide knowledge, sound critical judgment, and deep religious insight. We have marked many passages which deserve repeated study, especially those concerned with such topics as St. Paul's use of 'Body' and 'the Body,' the Last Supper and the Lord's Supper, Speaking with Tongues, and 'Maranatha.' Many *obiter dicta* challenge attention, as, for example, Dr. Moffatt's claim that St. Paul was not disillusioned by his Athenian experience, his contention that the 'ransom-passages' in Mk 10<sup>45</sup> is 'one of the most self-authenticating in the record,' and his submission that an incidental remark like that in 7<sup>10</sup> 'tells against the notion that gifted men in the primitive communities felt inspired to produce, by a free use of their devout imagination, sayings of the Lord to suit the requirements of the cult' (p. 80). We are particularly impressed by his careful study of the meaning of important Greek words in the Epistle, notably in the noble hymn to Love in ch. 13, and by his admirable exegesis of such passages as 7<sup>10f.</sup> 34. 36-8 10<sup>16f.</sup> 11<sup>16.</sup> 23-34 13<sup>3.</sup> 12f. 15<sup>24.</sup> 29. 51 16<sup>22</sup>. Here and there he does not carry us with him, as, for example, in his treatment of 4<sup>6</sup> and in his suggestion that the Galatian contribution to the Apostolic Collection appears to have been independently transmitted to Jerusalem (p. 272; cf. Ac 20<sup>4</sup>: 'Gaius of Derbe and Timothy'). These, however, are small points where students differ and will continue to differ. It is safe to say that henceforward no one will dream of making a careful study of 1 Co without taking into constant consideration Dr.